



## News Release

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### **Utah Adult and Youth Smoking Rates Have Dropped Significantly Since MSA-Funded Programs Began in 2000**

*Annual Report Shows Less than 12 percent of Utahns smoke*

(Salt Lake City, UT) -The Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) fourth Annual Report on Tobacco Prevention and Control continues to show significant reductions in Utah's adult and youth smoking rates and exposure to secondhand smoke since 2000. The report highlights the accomplishments of the UDOH's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (TPCP) and its many partners to fight tobacco use and save lives. Activities are funded through the Tobacco Master Settlement (MSA) and Cigarette Tax Restricted Accounts.

Since MSA-funded programs began, the high school student smoking rate has decreased by 39 percent (from 11.9 in 1999 to 7.3 percent in 2003). This means that 5,000 fewer Utah teens are smoking. Nationally, youth smoking rates have also declined, but Utah's rate of decline exceeds the national average of 37 percent.

Utah has also made great strides in reducing smoking among adults, with a decrease of 15 percent over the same time period. This translates to 15,000 fewer adult smokers. In fact, Utah's adult smoking rate is at its lowest level since the UDOH started to track population-based tobacco use rates in 1985. Utah is the first state in the country to meet the national Healthy People 2010 goal of decreasing adult smoking to less than 12 percent of the population.

The Annual Report shows child and adolescent exposure to secondhand smoke has decreased by 28 percent (from 6.0 percent in 2001 to 4.3 in 2003). As a result, 11,600 fewer children are at risk for secondhand smoke-related health conditions. "These impressive outcomes are the result of

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sustained, consistent, multi-faceted statewide efforts. Tobacco prevention and control programs benefit everyone in the state because they lead directly to reduced tobacco-related death, disease, and financial costs,” said Heather Borski, TPCP Manager, UDOH.

The programs include:

- The innovative TRUTH marketing campaign to prevent children from using tobacco and encourage tobacco users to quit.
- School and community-based efforts that promote tobacco prevention, strengthen and enforce tobacco policies, and link tobacco users to the help they need to quit.
- Free, easily accessible telephone, Internet, and community-based quitting programs such as the Utah Tobacco Quit Line, which help tobacco users quit.
- Enforcement efforts that assist retailers and businesses in complying with laws restricting tobacco sales to minors and the Utah Indoor Clean Air Act.
- Efforts to ensure those at higher risk for tobacco use have access to tailored services.

“We are very proud of the efforts Utahns are making to avoid and reduce tobacco use, but the task is far from finished,” adds Scott Williams, Executive Director, UDOH. “More than 190,000 Utahns continue to use tobacco.” Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S., and kills more than 1,200 Utahns annually. Utah incurs more than \$587 million annually in smoking-related medical costs, and smoking-attributable Medicaid expenditures alone amount to \$93 million.

While Utah smoking rates have declined overall, surveys show that people with lower incomes and fewer years of formal education have significantly higher rates of tobacco use compare to the general population. This is also true for Hispanic men, African Americans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders. “A long-term commitment to tobacco control is necessary to sustain this decline in tobacco use rates. This will not only improve the health and well-being of those who eliminate their exposure to tobacco, but it will reduce health care costs for all Utahns,” said Borski.

The annual report can be found online at [www.tobaccofreeutah.org](http://www.tobaccofreeutah.org).

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death; assuring access to affordable, quality health care; and promoting healthy lifestyles.*